UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/SPC/47/3
10 November 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/RUSSIAN

Forty-seventh session
SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
Agenda item 76

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Letter dated 3 November 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Declaration of Alma Ata on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media, adopted at the United Nations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Seminar, held at Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, from 5 to 9 October 1992 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 76.

(Signed) A. Arystanbekova
Permanent Representative
of Kazakhstan to the
United Nations

92-68854 3789e (E) 101192 111192 *111192*

/...

DECLARATION OF ALMA ATA ON PROMOTING INDEPENDENT AND PLURALISTIC ASIAN MEDIA

We the participants in the United Nations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Seminar on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media, held in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, from 5 to 9 October 1992,

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers",

Recalling General Assembly Resolution 59(I) of 14 December 1946, stating that freedom of information is a fundamental human right, and General Assembly Resolution 45/76 A of 11 December 1990 on information in the service of humanity,

Recalling Resolution 104 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-fifth session in 1989, in which the main focus is the promotion of "the free flow of ideas by word and image--at international as well as national levels",

Recalling Resolution 4.3 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-sixth session in 1991, which recognizes that a free, pluralistic and independent press is an essential component of any democratic society and which endorses the Declaration adopted by the participants at the United Nations/UNESCO Seminar on "Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press", held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May 1991,

Stressing the growing role of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), whose Intergovernmental Council decided, at its February 1992 session, to give priority to projects which seek to reinforce independent and pluralistic media,

Noting with appreciation the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Seminar, delivered on his behalf by his representative, the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the statement made by the Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics of UNESCO on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO at the opening of the Seminar,

Expressing our sincere appreciation to the United Nations and UNESCO for organizing the Seminar,

Expressing our gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Kazakhstan for their kind hospitality, which facilitated the success of the Seminar,

Expressing also our sincere appreciation to all the intergovernmental, governmental

and non-governmental bodies and organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which contributed to the United Nations/UNESCO effort to organize the Seminar,

Recognizing the historic emergence of newly independent media in the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union, and the need to build upon the innovative achievements of the Seminar in Africa,

Declare our full support for, and total commitment to, the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Windhoek, and acknowledge its importance as a milestone in the struggle for free, independent and pluralistic print and broadcast media in all regions of the world.

SPECIFIC PROJECT PROPOSALS

In Asia and the Pacific, including the newly independent Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union, which identify with the Asian region, we seek practical application of the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Windhoek, in conjunction with relevant national and international professional organisations and relevant UN agencies, in the following specific project proposals and in the following fields:

I. Legislation

To give expert advice and legal drafting assistance to replace redundant press laws inherited at independence with laws that create enforceable rights to freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, access to information and freedom of the press; to abolish monopolies and all forms of discrimination in broadcasting and allocation of frequencies, in printing, newspaper and magazine distribution, and in newsprint production and distribution; and to abolish barriers to launching new publications, and discriminatory taxation.

II. Training

To promote a programme of national in-country and sub-regional seminars and/or training courses covering:

(a) professional skills, including extensive training and treatment of development issues;

(b) management, marketing and technical skills for the print and broadcast media;

(c) international principles of freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of information and freedom of the press;

(d) international principles of freedom of association, management/staff relations, collective bargaining skills and the rights and responsibilities of representative associations of journalists, editors, broadcasters and publishers;

(e) principles of journalists' independence and the relationship between the editorial department of a newspaper, the board of directors and the administrative, advertising and commercial departments;

(f) appropriate curricula and training methodology for journalism training institutions (including tutor/lecturer exchange programmes) and special trainer programmes;

(g) access to training programmes and facilities;

(h) codes of conduct relating to advertising in the broadcast media;

(i) the rights of women in the media, and the rights of minority groups within societies.

III. Free Flow of Information

As a matter of urgency:

(a) To support the establishment of media resource centres in the Central Asian Republics where journalists and other media personnel can gain access to international news and information, manuals, textbooks and study materials, and where they can utilize desk-top publishing equipment to prepare material for publication;

(b) to assist independent media in the upgrading of production, content and presentation of television news and current affairs programmes through the provision of new technology and the exposure of staff to modern and alternative production techniques and values;

(c) to assist in the establishment of an inter-country news exchange service, in order to increase the flow of international, national and regional news and information to and from neighbouring countries, and to help upgrade technology and develop more extensive communication links.

IV. Safety of Journalists

To support the right of journalists to exercise their profession safely, and to establish a protection centre (or centres) in the region to link up with the proposed IFEX (International Freedom of Information Exchange) Action Alert Network for Asia, aiming specifically at the safety of journalists and press freedom issues.

V. Public Service Broadcasting

To encourage the development of journalistically independent public service broadcasting in place of existing State-controlled broadcasting structures, and to promote the development of community radio.

To upgrade educational broadcasting through support for distance education programmes such as English-language instruction and formal and non-formal education, literacy programmes, and information programmes on AIDS, the environment, children, etc.

VI. Professional Associations

To assist Central Asian journalists, editors, publishers and broadcasters in establishing truly independent representative associations, syndicates or trade unions of journalists and associations of editors, publishers and broadcasters where such bodies do not yet exist.

VII. Special Economic Issues

To identify economic barriers to the creation of new, independent media in Central Asia and in particular to arrange a feasibility study into alternative methods of acquiring and distributing newsprint, alternative facilities for printing and distributing newspapers and magazines and alternative means of obtaining low-interest credit.

****

The above projects, while identified as specific needs of Central Asian media, have region-wide applications. The participants call on UNESCO and its International

Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), international professional organizations, donor countries, foundations and other interested parties to contribute generously to, and cooperate in, the implementation of these initiatives.

The participants request that this Declaration be presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the United Nations General Assembly, and by the Director-General of UNESCO to the General Conference of UNESCO.

Alma-Ata, 9 October 1992